8. RECORDS OF GREATER SPOTTED EAGLE (*AQUILA CLANGA*) FROM SOUTHERN INDIA

On a visit to the Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary in the Chengai MGR dist., 80 km south of Chennai (=Madras), on February 14-15, 1996, we noticed two large raptors. They were larger than a kite, with short tail, thickset build and dark coloration. I could clearly see their white upper tail coverts and two rows of whitish spots on the wings which helped in their identification as greater spotted eagle (*Aquila clanga*). They were perched on trees within the tank, close to the nesting waterbirds. Each time they flew, they caused great commotion among the nesting birds, presumably as they posed a threat to the young ones.

From my past records, it appears this bird may be a rare winter visitor to Chennai. I have four sightings from the Guindy National Park [16.i.82; 13.xi.82; 28.xi.82 and 18.iii.90 (2 birds), once from Manali in North Chennai (30.i.83) and once at Vedanthangal on 23.iii.85. Besides, I have seen this bird twice at Kaliveli Tank near Pondicherry (31.i.88 and 29.x.88). My only other sighting of this species in southern India has been at Kogila Tank near Bangalore (2 birds) on 14.i.1990. Besides, Perennou (1989) has also reported this species from Kaliveli Tank in 1986-1987 and more recently Chandrasekhar (1996) has seen a bird at Vedanthangal in November, 1995.

Ali and Ripley (1983) mention that there are no recent records of this species from the Carnatic coast and the southernmost record is from Londa (N. Karnataka) by Koelz (1941). Over 100 years ago, Jerdon (1862) considered this species as "tolerably common in the Carnatic, and Malabar Coast, rare in the table land". However, the above records prove the species is still found in southern India, particularly in the Carnatic Coast, though it no longer appears to be common.

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V. SANTHARAM
68, 1st Floor,
Santhome High Road,
Chennai 600 028,
Tamil Nadu, India.

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9. UNUSUAL SIGHTING OF AN INDIAN BLACK CRESTED BAZA (*AVICEDA LEUPHOTES*)

This is to report the sighting and observation of an Indian black crested baza (*Aviceda leuphotes*) in a habitat not normally associated with it. The bird was observed on January 5, 1997 at 0830 hrs, in bright and clear weather, from the backwaters of Akkulam, a large brackish water lake, roughly 6 km northwest of Trivandrum city, within 1.5 km from the seacoast, 8° 31' 30" N, 77° 54' 23" S. This lake is overgrown with water hyacinth and other weeds and is highly polluted with the city's refuse. It is surrounded by coconut groves.

The bird was perched on a pole at a distance of 70 to 75 m from land, amidst dense water hyacinth and matted growth of mixed aquatic plants and grass, on water. The black

crest and distinguishing white breast with the dark border below were clearly visible. In flight, 2 to 3 white patches were noticed in the area of the secondaries, on both sides of the black rump.

The bird was solitary and feeding from the pole, it would glide into the weeds, land for a few seconds, pick up the prey and fly back to the pole with two or three lazy wingbeats. The whole action was highly reminiscent of an Indian roller. Eating of the prey could not be observed nor its identification made. The bird was observed for nearly half an hour. Other birds sharing the habitat were purple herons (*Ardea purpurea*) cormorants (*Phalacrocorax* sp.) whiskered terns (*Chlidonias hybrida*), pond herons (*Ardeola grayii*) eastern swallows (*Hirundo rustica*) and brahminy kites (*Haliastur indus*).

February 3, 1998 C. MOHAN KUMAR,
NP 6/386, Kaimanom PO,
Trivandrum 695 040,
Kerala, India.

10. ROOSTING BEHAVIOUR OF INDIAN PEAFOWL *PAVO CRISTATUS*

Roost site selection plays a pivotal role in the nesting success of any species. Judicious selection of the roosting site may enhance the survival of birds, by virtue of reduced heat loss, information sharing, accountability of population, and better protection from predators. (Tast and Rassi 1973, Gyllin *et al.* 1977, Gadgil and Ali 1975, Gadgil 1972).

The Indian peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*), a common bird in India, is known to roost in trees and large buildings at night. Though several papers have been written on the roosting behaviour of peafowl, detailed studies on roost site selection have only recently been carried out by Trivedi and Johnsingh (1996) in Gir forest.

On July 27, 1997, during our move to Sasan from Malanka village, near Madhuvanti dam on a 5 km stretch of road, we observed 28 electric poles of which 20 (71.42%) were occupied by Indian peafowl for roosting. To study the significance of this height as a preferable roost on the periphery of the Gir National Park, detailed observations were made on the birds roosting on the poles.

All the poles were examined carefully and the top part of each pole was categorised under 3 different roosting subsites i.e. (1) peak of the pole (2) top of the wire (3) three layers of horizontal bars. The number of peafowl occurring in each roosting site were recorded from 1915 to 2000 hrs till it became completely dark. On either side of the road there were a few crop fields and fallow land, but most of the area had forest cover.

Out of 16 poles used for roosting by 22 long trained (LT) birds, 13 (59.09%) roosted on top of the wire, 3 (13.64%) on the pole top and 6 (27.27%) over horizontal bars (Table 1). This top position of roosting was significantly preferred over horizontal bars ($X^2 = 8.08$, $P < 0.005$).

Out of total 45 short trained (ST) birds occupying 9 poles, 26 (57.77%) roosted on horizontal bars, whereas 17 (37.80%) roosted on wire and only 2 (4.44%) on pole peak (Table 1). This shows that there was no preference for horizontal bars ($X^2 = 1.08$, $0.25 < P < .50$).

Seven poles were occupied by a single LT bird exclusively, whereas on 6 poles one LT bird and other ST birds were recorded. On the other hand, on only two poles were 2 or more LT males roosting with ST birds.

Distribution of LT birds on a greater number of poles might be a behavioural adaptation to avoid predation risk. On the other hand, ST birds never roosted singly on a single pole. Furthermore, 4 poles were occupied only by ST birds.

Trivedi and Johnsingh (1996) have established that within the Gir National Park, peafowl preferred high trees. In view of their findings, we presume that all peafowl of the area should be roosting on the poles (the safest site in